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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Communists Prepare to Expand Korean Air War

A number of events during the past month have signaled a long-anticipated Communist effort further to extend air operations over North Korea. The movement of Communist air units into Manchuria, the recent increase in numbers of enemy jet interceptors operating in Korea, and the intensive preparations to ready Korean airfields point to the imminence of a new phase in Communist air operations in the Korean war.

Communist jet interceptor aircraft appeared in the Korean war approximately a year ago with the ostensible purpose of defending the Yalu river line against anticipated UN air strikes into Manchuria. Meanwhile, a program of rapid training and equipping of Chinese Communist air units was initiated.

The increase in both personnel and aircraft since the initial engagements were fought over the Yalu has resulted in a definite numerical superiority over comparable UN air strength in the theater. With the attainment of this superiority, it is possible that the Communists have now embarked on a new aerial phase of the Korean war in which the enemy's considerable potential will be used offensively.

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Prior to beginning extensive air operations from Korean fields, the Communists were faced with the problem of UN detection and destruction of their air facilities before they became operational. Early Communist efforts to rehabilitate airfields followed no discernible geographic pattern, and relied on camouflage rather than on local anti-aircraft defenses for protection.

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The recent Communist effort to put airfields into operation has followed a logical, well-conceived plan which has greatly enhanced the possibilities of its success. The positioning of new fields well within the defensive radius of Manchurian-based jet interceptors, as well as the concentration of both heavy and light anti-aircraft weapons at the fields, was calculated to give these embryonic air bases a maximum chance for survival.

The degree of success achieved by the Communists to date is best illustrated by a 23 October UN medium bomber raid on the airfield under construction at Namsi. An estimated 140 Communist jet interceptors destroyed three of the attacking B-29's and severely damaged the remaining five. Currently the three-airfield complex of Raechon-Namsi-Saamcham, near Sinanju, is still unserviceable owing to bomb damage and incomplete construction.

The evolution of a well-integrated air defense system in northwestern Korea was a natural precursor of attempts to base jet fighters at these new fields.

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A further decisive step in protecting northwestern Korea was the appearance of a large quantity of anti-aircraft artillery utilizing modern gun-laying radar and concentrated at strategic locations. Anti-aircraft artillery strength in Korea is now estimated at six Soviet-style divisions.

The emphasis placed on the defense of airfields is noted in a recent Far East Command estimate that the most heavily defended locations in North Korea are, in descending order:

- (1) Pyongyang east airfield,
- (2) Taechon airfield,
- (3) Sinuiju airfield,
- (4) the city of Pyongyang,
- (5) Namsi and Saamchan airfields.

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The enemy's determined efforts to attain air superiority over northwestern Korea have been adequately demonstrated by the sustained October level of Communist daylight jet interception sorties flown. Another significant development was the sustained rate of night interception activity in late October. While some of these night flights were probably flown from small Korean fields, night combat patrols by Manchurian-based conventional fighters--not noted prior to 10 October -- have now become routine.

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The depth of the enemy's jet interceptor penetration into Korea is well illustrated by an encounter on 24 October in which the UN aircraft were pursued for the first time to the Wonsan area on the east coast; and by a 27 October interception during which UN F-80 fighters were pursued as far south as Chinnampo, the second time that penetration to such depth has been noted.

The US Far East Command, in the light of these developments, foresees that the enemy may develop his air strategy along the following lines:

- (1) Attainment of air superiority over the Sinanju area;
- (2) Construction and rehabilitation of airfields in the area, under protection of aerial cover;
- (3) Movement of jet fighters onto these new fields to strengthen the forces maintaining air superiority;
- (4) Expansion of the area of Communist air superiority further southward once jet strength on Korean fields has been increased;
- (5) Movement of conventional fighters and ground attack and light bombers to these secured Korean fields;
- (6) A challenge to UN air superiority over the immediate battle area and initiation of air to ground strikes against UN ground forces and installations.

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